

L.M. FINN

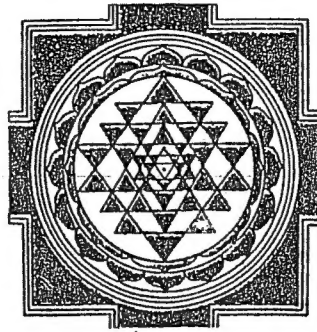
KĀMAKALĀ - THE KERNEL OF DESIRE IN THE ŚRĪCAKRA

Anyone familiar with Tantrism will not be surprised to learn that the symbolism of Kāmakalā is complex and worked out in great detail; something which I will simplify to the bare bones and discuss with the aid of diagrams.

When one gathers together pieces of the Kāmakalā puzzle from the various sources, there emerges a symbolism that appears to work on at least three levels; i.e. on the levels of the transcendent, subtle and gross modes of existence. Furthermore, these three modes of Kāmakalā can be found at the very heart of the Śrīcakra — itself one of the prime symbols of Tantrism. The Śrīcakra is a *maṇḍala* which is not only recognized as a symbol of totality, but is also considered to be the actual embodiment of the goddess when duly consecrated. Thus, Śrīcakra, universe and goddess are impelled by Kāmakalā: in other words, impelled by the colossal desire of Śiva for Śakti and Śakti for Śiva.

Meditation on Kāmakalā is prescribed in connection with the ninth innermost *cakra* of the Śrīcakra called Sarvānandamaya and represented by the *bindu*. Figure 1.

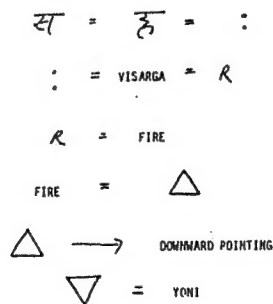
Figure 1

The *Sri Yantra*

- 1) The four-portal cakra or bhupura - *Trilokyamohana*
- 2) The sixteen petal lotus - *Sarvāṅgaparipūraṇa*
- 3) The eight-petal lotus - *Sarvasaṅkṣobhākṛaka*
- 4) The fourteen-triangle cakra - *Sarvasaubhāgyakṛaka*
- 5) The outer ten-triangle cakra - *Sarvadr̥hasādhaka*
- 6) The inner ten-triangle cakra - *Sarvarakṣaka*
- 7) The eight-triangle cakra - *Sarvarogahara*
- 8) The inner triangle (trikona) - *Sarvasiddhinaya*
- 9) The central point (bindu) - *Sarvānandamaya*

We are told in verses I:165-66 of the *Vāmakeśvara Tantra* that this *bindu* should be construed as a face and two breasts; and below the two breasts one should think on «the half of that which follows 's' as a downward pointing one». As with other similar cryptic references this statement is an allusion to the genitals or *yoni* of the goddess. To give an example of how abstruse such references can be, «the half of that which follows 's' as a downward pointing one» may be interpreted as follows: Figure 2.

Figure 2



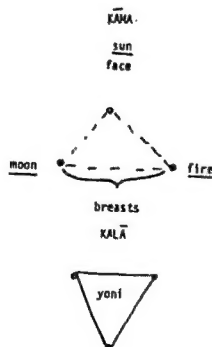
What follows 's' in the Sanskrit alphabet is the letter 'ha' which halved is the aspiration called *visarga*. *Visarga* is the letter «r» for which it can substitute, and in Tantric symbolism the letter 'r' stands for fire. An upward pointing triangle is also called fire or «*vahni*», hence, one should consider the upward triangle as «downward pointing» — thereby producing the feminine *yoni* triangle. Thus one concludes that Kāmakalā is represented by *bindu* and within that *bindu* one should construe a face, beneath which are two more *bindus* representing breasts and below them the downward pointing triangle or *yoni*. Figure 3.

Figure 3



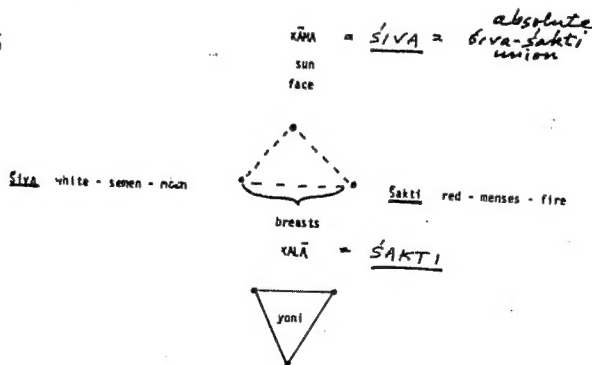
However, the concept of Kāmakalā is more complex. It is clearly stated in the *Kāmakalāvīlāsa* (vv 6 and 7) that Kāmakalā has a more fundamental three part structure expressing itself in terms of «sun-moon -fire» relating to a schema of dots and triangles. The «Kāma» of Kāmakalā is the single dot of the sun and the two dots or *bindus* of «kalā» are moon and fire. The three together compose the upward pointing triangle which comprises the face and breasts of the goddess. The *yoni* below is an additional element that represents a further evolution of the original three *bindus* in an opposite and inverted form, although — as we have just seen above — the totality of face, breasts and *yoni* within the *bindu* is again called Kāmakalā. Figure 4.

Figure 4



The basic three-part Kāmakalā of sun-moon-fire illustrates an evolution away from the absolute Absolute that is stated in terms of a recurring opposition and union, i.e. the cosmic forces are the expression of a perpetually renewed dialectic. The primordial state of Śiva-Śakti unity is Absolute Supreme Being symbolised in Kāmakalā as the sun, Kāma — the face. The dialectic intrinsic to any evolution away from the Absolute state of unity is symbolised by «kalā» — the moon and fire which are the breasts. They are perceived as inherent and complementary aspects of the sun since the moon is round and gives light, and fire is its hot and flaming nature. According to the texts, the face as Kāma is preponderantly of supreme Śiva nature representing the ultimate union of Śiva and Śakti. The breasts as «kalā» are predominantly supreme Śakti. In the three-fold symbolism of Kāmakalā this one part Śiva, two-part Śakti relationship replicates. The breasts — which are in contradistinction to the face — are of supreme Śakti nature demonstrating that — as the Śākta tantras maintain — all creative movement is an expression of the goddess. However, once differentiated from the absolute Absolute, this fundamental Śakti dynamism *immediately* sets up its own dialectic involving a static Śiva-white-moon pole (also sometimes called semen) and a kinetic Śakti-red-fire pole (also called menstrual blood) indicating that even though Śiva nature may dominate at the Absolute level, and Śakti nature dominates at all levels of differentiation away from the Absolute, yet Śiva and Śakti continue to participate at every stage and remain inherently one in spite of an apparent functional division. Figure 5.

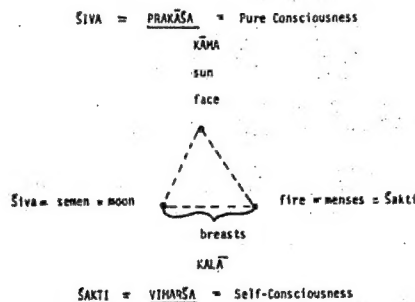
Figure 5



How does this basic two to one relationship come about?

In Śākta and Kashmir Śaiva speculations the apparent Śiva-Śakti duality results from the nature of consciousness. Absolute supreme being is perceived as a state of pure consciousness — but it is pure consciousness with an inherent capacity to mirror itself. In short, it's the consciousness of being conscious. This self-reflection constitutes an actually undivided but seemingly distinct part of the state of pure consciousness. The point or *bindu* — intrinsically having no extension — serves both to symbolise the dimensionless nature of pure consciousness as well as the «centering» inherent in the notion of self-consciousness. The two aspects of the one absolute state are known as *Prakāśa* — the light of pure consciousness, and *Vimarśa* — the self-reflective consciousness that presupposes consciousness per se. When the point or *bindu* begins to differentiate, it is the dynamic *Vimarśa* or Śakti aspect of Absolute consciousness that comes to the fore since — even on a divine creative scale — creative desire implies a willful, therefore self-conscious, consciousness. Figure 6.

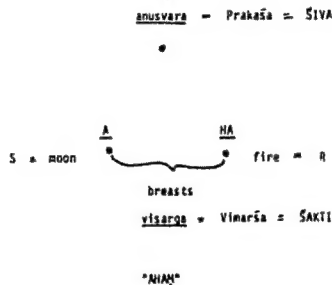
Figure 6



The consciousness nature of the transcendent *bindu* with its inherent aspect of self-consciousness is symbolically demonstrated in another way. The *bindu*'s potential for manifestation is described as a vibration or quickening called «*spandana*, *sphoṭa*, *sphuraṇa*» that arises from the mutual desire of the *bindu*'s intrinsic Śiva-Śakti essence. The vibration is associated with transcendent sound or *nāda*, and because it is necessarily inarticulate, its approximations in the Tantric symbolism of the alphabet are the

two dots of *visarga* and the single dot of *anusvāra*. The upward pointing Kāmakaḷā triangle also contains two *bindus* below corresponding to *visarga*, and one *bindu* above corresponding to *anusvāra*. The two dots of *visarga* at the base of the triangle represent Śakti and the creative urge with which the word *visarga* is synonymous. In their turn, these two *bindus* also symbolise the beginning and end of the Sanskrit alphabet. The first letter «a» is Śiva and the last letter «ha» is Śakti. The combination of «a» plus «ha» and the nasal *anusvāra* above, produces «aḥam» or «I» — the awareness of awareness. Hence, according to the *Kāmakaḷāvīlāsa* (vv. 5,6 and 7) the *bindu* of transcendent Kāmakaḷā is truly said to be «aḥamātātma». The symbolism is reinforced by the fact that *visarga* can substitute both for «s» — which also happens to be the Tantric alphabet symbol for the moon, and «r» — the Tantric alphabet symbol for fire. The interaction is a triangular relationship intrinsic to the *bindu*. Figure 7.

Figure 7

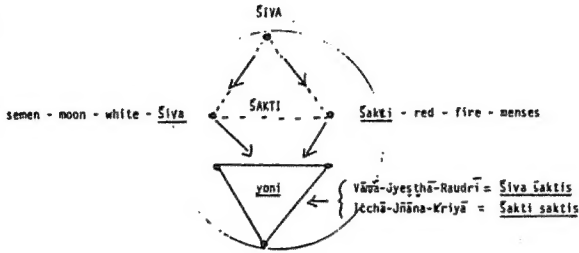


In its turn, the fundamental Śiva triangle sets up its own opposition which is the downward pointing *śakti* triangle representing the *yoni* — the symbolic birthplace of all creation, and as such it represents a further stage away from the absolute Absolute of the «sun» face. We have reached a stage of *virtual* manifestation within the *bindu* where the creative impetus of transcendent Kāmakaḷā is growing like a foetus in an egg.

Thus Śiva as white-moon-semen *bindu* and Śakti as red-fire-menstrual blood *bindu* may be seen as coming into ecstatic union in the reconstellated and inverted triple elements of Kāmakaḷā which is the *yoni* of the transcendent goddess positioned within

the central *bindu* of the Śrīcakra. Verse 6 of the *Kāmakalā-vilāsa* calls this central *bindu* the «Śiva-Śakti mithuna piṇḍa» making the sexual symbolism quite explicit. Altogether this is Kāmakalā in its noumenous and transcendent aspect. Figure 8.

Figure 8



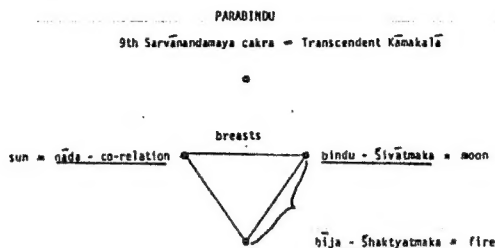
But there exist other remarks about Kāmakalā and the nature of the goddess that seriously muddle the issue. Here I will give two examples. Woodroffe — who was evidently deeply instructed by Tantric pundits — says at one point that the two breasts are «the first emanative stage in the production of *mantra*. The second stage is *Bindu* or *Shabdabrahman*; the third is *Tribindu* (*bindu-nāda-bīja*) or Kāmakalā». In this version Kāmakalā appears at a stage *after* the breasts... Whilst verse 34 of the *Saundaryalaharī* says of the goddess that «thou art the frame of Śambu with the *sun* and *moon* as thy breasts».

Taking into consideration these and other apparently contradictory remarks, one concludes that it is at a second level of *actual* manifestation that the symbolism of the breasts as sun and moon (instead of moon and fire) enters in. But at this stage too the *bindu* reveals its essential triune nature with the result that there is a second Kāmakalā on the cosmic plane corresponding to cosmic *puruṣa* or actual physical creation.

When creation is made manifest, the three basic aspects are revealed as «*bindu-Śivātmaka*, *bīja-Śaktyātmaka*» and «*nāda*» their co-relation. *Śārādā Tilaka* I: 8-9. What is here again called «*bindu*» is in fact the *kārya* or «produced» *bindu* not to be confused with the transcendent *parabindu*. «*Bindu-nāda-bīja*» designate the constituents of actual creation although they are the same triple *bindus* involved in the transcendent *bindu*. In cosmic Kāma-

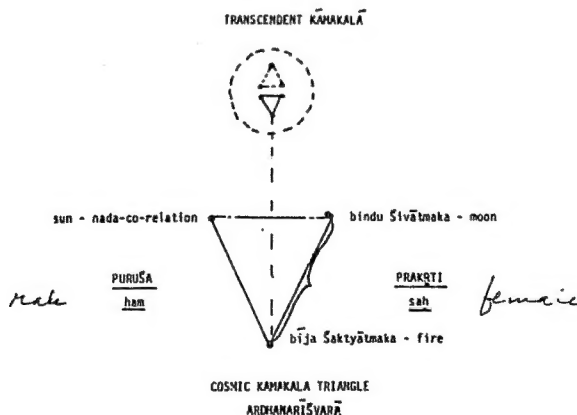
kalā they are fully actualised in a transposed order that places sun and moon at the base of the downward pointing triangle since we know from the various quotations that sun and moon can also be the breast of the goddess. Figure 9.

Figure 9



The result is that on the sun side there exists a dominant maleness with the dominant femininity on the moon-fire side. Cosmic Kāmakaḷā thereby constitutes the half-female half-male nature of Ardhanārīśvara (or in Śākta terms Ardhanareśvarī) recalling the fundamentally androgynous nature of the supreme being. Furthermore, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* and «ham» and «saḥ» would naturally seem to be associated with this initial phase of manifestation. By incidentally combining transcendent with cosmic Kāmakaḷā, one gets the three eyes of the goddess and the mouth from which the universe is sometimes said to be vomited. Figure 10.

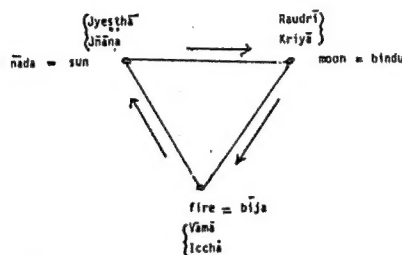
Figure 10



The cosmic Kāmakalā triangle can be related to the eighth *cakra* of the Śrīcakra called the «*trikoṇa*» or inner triangle *cakra* named Sarvasiddhimaya and representing the first phase of actual physical manifestation. See Figure 1.

Now the primordial *śaktis* who actualise physical creation are the Śiva *śaktis* called Vāmā-Jyeṣṭhā-Raudrī and the Śakti *śaktis* called Icchā-Jñāna-Kriyā. Vāmā and Icchā come first as a «*vakrarekhā*» or oblique line extending from fire to sun; Jyeṣṭhā in cooperation with Jñāna takes the form of a straight line (*rjurekhā*) and Raudrī and Kriyā complete the triangular shape. Figure 11.

Figure 11



The emergence of Vāmā is regularly decribed in terms of a goad or *aṅkuṣa*, but the texts with which I am familiar do virtually nothing to explain the metaphor. The clue to an understanding must therefore lie in the shape of the goad itself which is basically a two-pronged instrument with one straight spike and another backward beinding spike that corresponds to the oblique line or *vakrarekhā* of Vāmā. In addition, the straight prong of the goad — very likely symbolic of the cosmic Meru — suggests that the energy of the original *parabindu* is not arrested by the initial manifestation but continues to descend (*avatarāyati*) to lower levels of creation at the same time as its three constituent aspects remain in a constant inter-relationship. Figures 12 and 13.

Figure 12

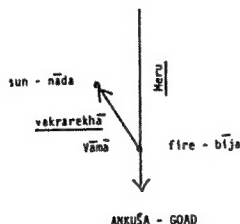
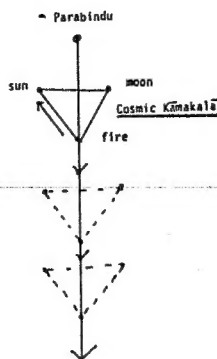
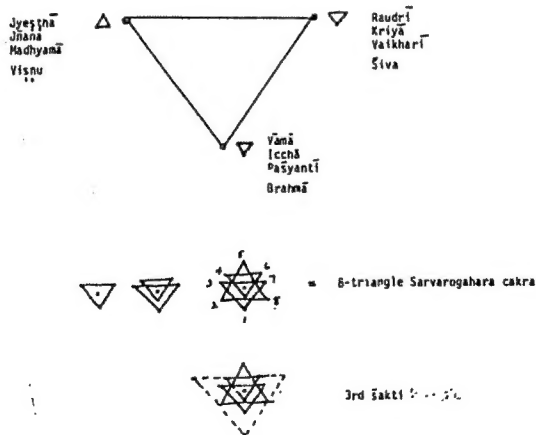


Figure 13



Because the sun as Jyeṣṭhā and Jñāna especially represents the *Prakāśa*, Śiva or *puruṣa* side of creation, and the moon and fire combinations represent the over-all Śakti, *Vimarśa* or *prakṛti* side of creation, the triangles that emerge from the union of these pairs of Śiva and Śakti *śaktis* should become one upward Śiva triangle and to downward Śakti triangles. Significantly, this basic one-part Śiva two-part Śakti relationship is integral to the formation of the subsequent *cakra* in the Śrīcakra. This is the eight-triangle *cakra* called Sarvarogahara composed of one Śiva and two Śakti triangles and from which the Śrīcakra continues to evolve, in one method, by a mere extension of the lines. Figure 14.

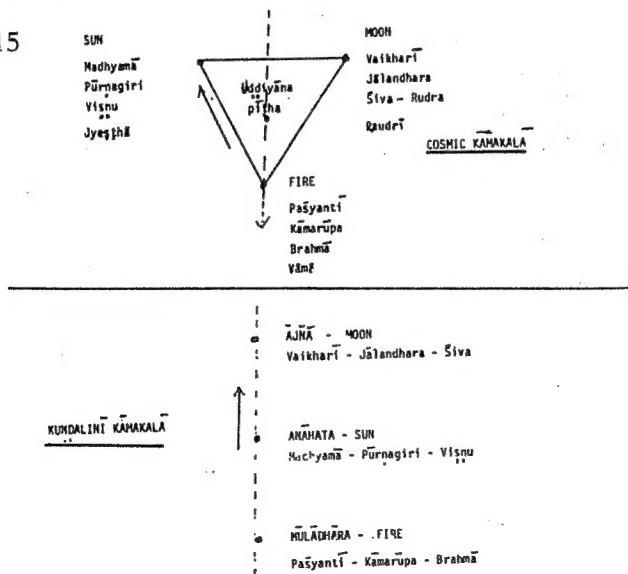
Figure 14



Thus, we find valid schemas for the transcendent Kāmakalā of the *bindu*, and the cosmic Kāmakalā of the *trikoṇa cakra*. But what about those subtle spheres of being said to exist between the transcendent and the gross physical states? Do they find a Kāmakalā expression? I believe they do because Kāmakalā is present in a third and personal microcosmic stage discovered through Kuṇḍalinī yoga.

In relation to Kāmakalā the chief thing to note about Kuṇḍalinī yoga is that in the subtle body the lower region from Mūlādhāra to Svādhiṣṭhāna is generally recognized as the region of fire. From Maṇipura to Anāhata is the solar region, and the Viśuddhi and Ājñā *cakras* constitute the upper lunar sphere. Kuṇḍalinī *śakti* is said to reside in the lower fire region and Śiva in the upper lunar sphere. A *sādhaka* who wishes to practice the yoga of the subtle body, first identifies his *jīva* with Śakti in the Mūlādhāra. Then, in a prescribed manner, he raises her to a state of union with Śiva in the transcendent Sahasrāra in the so-called «a-ka-tha» triangle that can be identified with the *yonī* of transcendent Kāmakalā. Subsequent to this state of mystic union, the personal world process is re-established by returning Kuṇḍalinī to her base in the spine and by reinstating in the *sun maṇḍala* of the heart, the fruit of that union which is the redivinized *jīva* as Lord. Figure 15.

Figure 15



Consequently, we once again have the Kāmakaḷā interplay between the opposing fiery Śakti and the moon-like Śiva whose union is expressed as the divinised Self in the sun centre of the subtle body.

In relation to the Śrīcakra, we should visualise these subtle spheres as an invisible, upward extension of the inner triangle *cakra* that was just discussed with respect to cosmic Kāmakaḷā. For this purpose, the three-dimensional Śrīcakra then appears as a stepped stupa-like mass with the flagpole-like extension of the subtle body to be imagined above it, topped by the transcendent *bindu*. In this way, a ritual worship of the Śrīcakra that begins with the outermost Bhūpura *cakra* is seen to naturally culminate in that inner path by which transcendent union is realized and without which the worship of the Śrīcakra is not really complete.

One principal reason for visualising the Śrīcakra in this way is the very brief comment to verse 9 of the *Saundaryalaharī** indicating that the Mūlādhāra «is no other than the *trikoṇa* of the Śrīcakra». If so, the *trikoṇa cakra* is the interface between the gross psycho-physical body and the six *cakras* of the subtle body. Appropriately, pictures of the Mūlādhāra would seem to depict this interface by a prominent *śakti* or downward pointing triangle.

We may conclude that the subtle spheres of being form an integral — if invisible — part of the structure of the Śrīcakra that is best appreciated when the Śrīcakra is seen in its three-dimensional form where the transcendent *bindu* at the heart of the Śrīcakra can be visualised as situated well above the stupa-like base. In between the *bindu* and the base lie the subtle spheres of being that on the microcosmic scale constitute the path of Kuṇḍalinī, and on the macrocosmic scale, the godly levels of being

* *Saundaryalaharī*, trsl. and comment. by S.S. SASTRI and T.R. AYYANGAR, Theosophical Publishing House, Madras, 1977.

known as *bhūvar*, *sva*, *mahar*, *janar*, *tapar* and *satya* — all three planes imbued with the divinely sexual forces that the symbolism of Kāmakalā represents. Figure 16.

Figure 16

